

MECHANICAL MEMORIES MAGAZINE

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*The only UK magazine dedicated to
vintage coin-operated amusement machines*

Mechanical Memories Magazine

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Editorial

Hello, and welcome to the March magazine. Many thanks to those of you who responded to my plea for articles for the magazine. I now have a stock of material to keep us going for a couple of months, but do please keep it coming in! I am really pleased to report that following on from the excellent piece about Ian Jamieson last month, Stuart Dale has actually made contact with Ian, who has very generously written a history of Jamiesons Automatics, exclusively for this magazine. I plan to publish it in two parts, in the May and June issues, taking us into the magazine's summer break.

Well, time has flown by and we've already reached that time of year when I'm desperately trying to get ready for the Easter school holidays down at Brighton. At the time of writing, it looks like the forthcoming weekend is going to be another washout, making March a right-off so far – all the more reason to hope for a good Easter. So if you're out and about in the Brighton area over the Easter holidays, do pop in to see me at the arcade. If you haven't visited before, Mechanical Memories is really easy to find – we're at beach level about 100 yards west of the Palace pier.

On the subject of Brighton, I am finding it increasingly difficult to obtain good quality old pennies. You might be surprised to hear that I 'lose' 2000+ each year (that's punters nicking them). So if you have any you'd like to donate, please bring a hand-full down to Brighton and play my machines free of charge! (Elizabeth or GVI only please).

And finally, Brian King contacted me recently with news that his stock of MMM binders is now running low, with less than twenty left. So if you would like some binders for your magazines and haven't yet ordered, best get in quick!

Until next time, all the best

Jerry

Front Cover Picture: Sweetmeats multi-column vending machine. There's no particular reason for using this picture for the front cover other than this rare cast iron beauty sold at auction recently. For most of us, our interest in vintage coin-operated amusement machines doesn't extend too far into the field of vending.....but I'd swap one of my allwins for this incredible vendor any day!

Dreamland

MARGATE

Save Dreamland Update March 2013

Back in January this year I celebrated 10 years of the Save Dreamland Campaign by recalling the events of that first year. I propose to occasionally continue that article over the coming months, by reviewing a further year in the life of the Campaign. In this month's MMM, and exclusive to MMM, I continue the story with the events of our second year, 2004, which saw the Campaign attend its first ever public inquiry...

10 YEARS OF THE SAVE DREAMLAND CAMPAIGN: 2004

In an interview featured in the January 2004 edition of amusement park industry magazine Park World, the operator of Dreamland throughout the 2003 season, showman David Wallis, confirmed that he would be interested in operating the park again for the 2004 season. This was great news, and showed that Dreamland continued to be a viable operation. In a separate interview David Collard, who operated the Scenic Railway independently throughout the 2003 season, stated, "It worked out very well and easily paid for itself, with quite a bit left over".

At the time of this news, I made a statement on the Save Dreamland Campaign website, which summed up the position as I saw it at the time:

"This is yet more good news for Margate. We already knew that more than one established theme park operator wants to buy the site and invest in its rides and attractions. We now have further confirmation that this important tourist attraction is a viable business. The very person who operated it this year has now confirmed that he would do it again next year. He would not be doing that if the park doesn't make money.

"And further confirmation from Dave Collard that the Scenic Railway, operated as a separate concession, can more than pay its way is very welcome news indeed. Park World very cleverly identifies the only real issue that we have to deal with now. We now know the park is viable; that is no longer the issue. Park World correctly identifies that land values are the only issue remaining. We now call on the Council - with all the evidence now available to it - to stand firm in its rejection of retail on the site."

In 2004, Thanet District Council commissioned consultants TM2 to produce a masterplan for Margate, to include the Dreamland site. The Campaign quickly distanced itself from the consultation exercise when it became clear that none of the options put forward in the questionnaire included the retention of an amusement park at Dreamland. The Masterplan was co-funded by Stadium Developments.

On 30th March 2004 Sarah Vickery attended a Margate Masterplan Public Consultation Meeting at the Winter Gardens. Representatives from Thanet District Council and Tibbalds were present to discuss the first draft of the Masterplan. In a report on the Save Dreamland Campaign website, Sarah stated: "I pointed out that the plan is predicated towards redeveloping the site; worryingly the Tibbalds representative I spoke to was not aware that two amusement park operators have made offers on the site. I also pointed out that Question 5 of the Questionnaire is inexcusably loaded, as well as being misleading; the Scenic [Railway] cannot be moved so this should not be suggested as an option."

On 9th April 2004, the Save Dreamland Campaign submitted its formal representations on the Margate Masterplan. In this letter and representations I was very critical indeed of the approach the consultants had taken towards the study. The covering letter explained why we believed the Margate Masterplan was seriously flawed:

"The consultants do not appear to be aware that two established amusement park operators have confirmed their intention to acquire [Dreamland] at full independently-assessed market value and invest millions of pounds in its rides and infrastructure. It is believed that this investment would return Dreamland to the major regional tourist attraction that it was before it was acquired by the present owner. We know that the consultants were not aware of this because the representative from Tibbalds Planning & Urban Design Ltd (the lead consultants) confirmed this at the stakeholders consultation meeting on 30 March 2004."

The letter also asked why the retention of the Scenic Railway within an amusement park was excluded from the questionnaire, despite being one of the options considered in the report. It also asked why Question 5 of the Questionnaire was 'loaded'.

The Thanet Local Plan Inquiry was held in spring/summer 2004 and the session on Dreamland was held on 29 June 2004. I submitted a proof of evidence on behalf of the Save Dreamland Campaign and gave evidence on behalf of the Campaign. Susan Marsh MBE, now the Secretary of The Dreamland Trust, advocated for the Campaign. In summary, my proof of evidence made the following key points:

- The Dreamland site was of critical importance to Margate as a seaside resort, and must be retained and enhanced. It was the only tourist attraction in the Isle of Thanet that drew more than 100,000 visitors (even in its then artificially run-down state it drew almost 700,000 visitors per year in 2002, placing it in the top ten amusement parks in the country). I presented evidence that gave some initial indication of the effects of Margate's first Easter without Dreamland, with disappointment expressed by visitors and tourism businesses.

- I set out the positive impact that an amusement park can have on a seaside resort. I used the example of Adventure Island at Southend-on-Sea, which opened in 1998. At Southend, surrounding tourism businesses all responded to the investment in a successful amusement park by investing in their own facilities. I explained that the changes in the overall appearance of Southend's seafront area since it opened had been marked and that the fortunes of the town had been completely turned around by the continued investment in the amusement park over this period.
- Although the park had been run down over recent years, I presented evidence that demonstrated that the park would not only be viable under a committed owner, but could be the focus of the town's regeneration. I also presented evidence that showed that similar sized parks in other towns, with broadly the same size of catchment area, were thriving and drawing many more visitors than Dreamland. I also drew attention to Southend-on-Sea, which has an amusement park on the main seafront area, which is smaller than Dreamland, and which has been upgraded over the last few years. This investment has resulted in a huge increase in visitors to both the park and the town as a whole, and the business is very profitable.
- I presented evidence on the heritage of the Dreamland site, which is unique in this country and should therefore be protected for the benefit of the town as a whole. The Scenic Railway roller coaster was the UK's oldest operating roller coaster and is considered to be of international importance. It is of note in terms of listed buildings policy that the Scenic Railway is viable as a stand-alone attraction.
- I also explained that there was interest from established amusement park operators in acquiring and investing in the park. I presented a significant amount of evidence on this. I had (and still have) no doubt that Dreamland could not only survive, but also prosper, under one of these interested operators. I stated that there was absolutely no reason why Margate should lose its biggest tourist attraction, as long as planning policies continued to protect it for this use.

Dreamland reopened in July 2004 and operated through the main holiday season. It was again operated by David Wallis, but this year he also operated the Scenic Railway as part of the park, having seen it successfully operated the previous year by Mr Collard. This again was evidence that the park was viable. It was another very good season for the park, albeit with the ride count gradually decreasing as rides were sold off.

On 3rd September 2004, towards the end of the 2004 season, the Isle of Thanet Gazette featured an interview with David Wallis, which again provided evidence of

the park's viability. He said that he would like to return for another season if owner Jimmy Godden lets him. Wallis told the Gazette: "We do feel that there is a need for this type of entertainment in Margate."

The Council issued a report on the public consultation exercise carried out on the Margate Masterplan in August 2004. This stated that the future of Dreamland "understandably generated the most passionate responses". The report went on to state:

"The public sees the Dreamland site as Margate's key potential tourism/leisure generator, and the closure of the facility is seen as highly negative for the town's future. The clear view from the public was that tourism and leisure should continue to be the strong leading use for the site and that the Council should be steadfast in its opposition to major retail development there. Equally, housing development (particularly low quality development) to an extent which would prevent the site being a major tourism/leisure generator should be avoided."

Dreamland generated more responses than any other question in the Masterplan consultation, attracting over 44% of all responses, "with almost all of them strongly supporting the use of the site for a major amusement park, family-based attraction". Nearly half of the written comments about the Dreamland site concerned the Scenic Railway, which represented nearly 20% of all the written comments received.

The report concluded on Dreamland that: "There was a strong public view that the Council should be highly proactive regarding the future of the Dreamland site and that it should actively seek solutions for it in order to benefit the town's future". This is significant and was clear early support for the Council taking the direct action that it is now taking.

The Council did not progress further with the flawed Masterplan document and it was never formally adopted by the Council. We would have to wait until 2005 to see the outcome of the public inquiry, and that will be covered in a future article.

Nick Laister

Nick Laister (Chairman, The Dreamland Trust)

www.dreamlandmargate.com
www.savedreamland.co.uk

Proctors Fairs Through Two World Wars

by Albert Proctor

The Proctor family has been providing fun fairs, predominantly in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire, for over 100 years. The founder of the business was John Albert Proctor, whose family were circus entertainers. Today the business is run by his grandson, John Proctor. His father was Albert Proctor who, in the 1970s, wrote a book about his life on the fairgrounds through the two world wars and some of the hardships and tragedies that befell the family during this time. This book is his story, as he wrote it.

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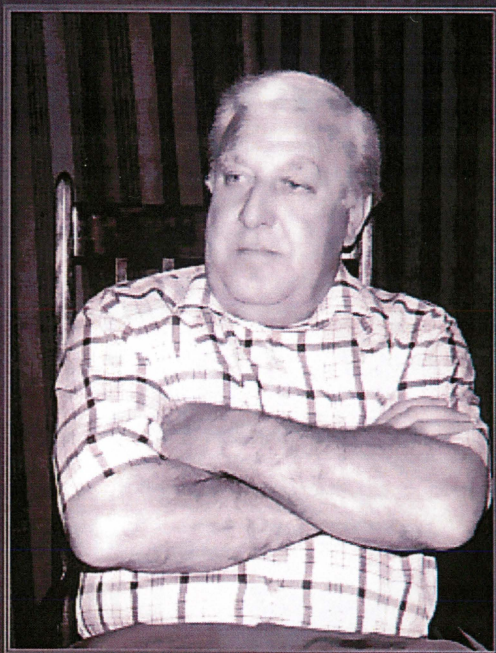
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Proctors Fairs through two World Wars

by Albert Proctor



Edited by
Neil Calladine
and
John Proctor



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Ein Gerät, welches durch seinen oben stehenden Überwachungsapparat eine ständige steigende Beliebtheit erreicht.

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KONTAKTSTELLE: SCHARY UND SCHUMANN - BRAUNSCHWEIG

Rex Rotor

By Stuart Dale

This month's offering is the story of my three reel Rex Rotor console style bandit and how I came to own it. As some of you will know, I am not a fan of 'bandit' type machines in general, but I do have a liking of the unusual and quirky types of machines, and the Rex certainly is quirky.

I first saw this machine about three years ago when it was put up for sale on a well known internet auction site, I am a sure you all know the one I am talking about. Even though the machine was in a pretty sorry state and non-working, it was love at first sight, so I put in a bid. The machine sat there all week without any other bids, even though lots of people were watching it. I thought it was in the bag, then at the very last moment I was outbid. My heart sank and I kicked myself for not putting in a higher proxy bid. Yes, I know we have all been there!

Anyway, a few months went by, and by chance the subject of the Rex came up, and I was told that the winning bidder was none other than Harold English, which made a lot of sense because Harold was the un-crowned king of the German bandit. I also learned that sadly Harold's health was failing him and he was starting to let some of his machines go.



By chance, a collector friend of mine was going down to see Harold with a view to buying one of his machines and it was arranged that I would go with him to look at the Rex. To cut a long story short, we both had a very enjoyable day at Harold's house, where we got to see and play some of his collection of German wall machines, and we both came home with a new machine for our collections. Sadly, that was the last time I ever saw Harold, as he passed away a few months after our visit. He may be gone but he is not forgotten.

Once I got the machine back home, I did a little research and I found it was dated 1954, which makes it about the same age as me, give or take a few months, and had been produced in a choice of styles. It came as a countertop machine, like your 'normal' bandit style; a wall machine and a console machine like mine.



*Rex Rotor in its wall machine form,
and (inset) as a counter-top.*

This machine would have started its life working on the old 10 Pfennig coin, and just like a lot of ex German machines, it had been converted to old penny play when it was exported to the UK. This suited me, as I like to try and keep all my machines working on old penny play.

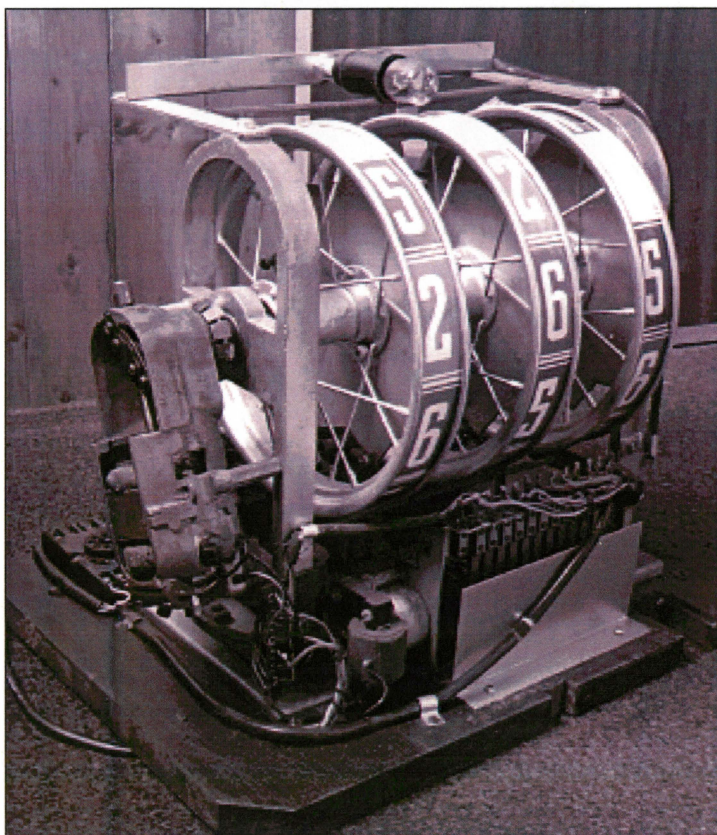
The first thing I did was to photograph the machine as I stripped it down. I then set to restoring the wooden cabinet, which was in quite a state through years of abuse and bad storage, but I am happy to report that NO woodworm were found to be in residence. Once I was happy with the cabinet I made a start on the electro-mechanical mechanism.



Stuart's nicely restored case, ready for re-assembly.

The reels for the machine are very unusual as they are made from 3 small bike wheels that have had the tyres removed and reel strips put in their place. If we were using ex M.O.D. relays in our early post WWII machines, why shouldn't the Germans use surplus bike wheels in theirs?

Surprisingly, the only bit that needed anything other than a good clean and a tweak was the main electric motor and gearbox. This was seized solid and had to be stripped down to the last nut and bolt, cleaned and then reassembled. I'm happy to say it is working fine now. I did have to remove the original reel strips and make some new ones. The machine must have been stood in bright sunlight for a good number of years, as a quarter section of each wheel was badly faded by the light, so thank god for the idiot's guide to PhotoShop!

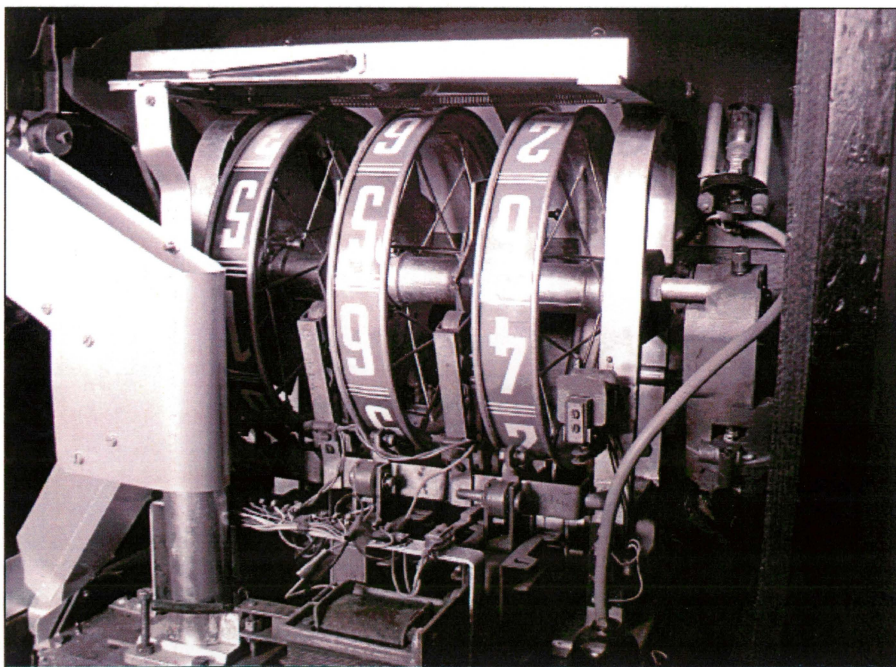


The mechanism, utilising old German bike wheels!

The game play for the machine is simple and straightforward. Once you insert your penny the reels start to spin automatically, and the reels stop automatically in order from left to right. There is a re-spin button which allows you the option of restarting the first reel during the time that the re-spin light is lit. As you need to have a 4 or a 2 on the first reel if you are going to stand a chance of getting a winning line, this is a good feature. Should you be lucky enough to get a winning line, that amount is paid out via the chute on the front of the machine.

I hope you have enjoyed this little ramble into the story of my Rex Rotor machine, and maybe you have a similar tale to tell? So why not put pen to paper and share it with the readers of this magazine, I am sure they would love to hear it. I know I would....

Stuart Dale



The mechanism assembled in the machine, ready to go!

Vintage Penny Arcades

By Jerry Chattenton

So, continuing from last month, here's a round up of all the vintage penny arcades and collections to be found in the UK (that I know of). Let's start with the Baker Empire:

Having lost his Southport site last year (which was the biggest penny arcade in the country), Clive's machines were dispersed from the North to South of the country. I mentioned the arcade on the Blackpool North pier last month, but Clive also managed to site a number of machines on the South Parade pier at Southsea, Portsmouth. That was even more short-lived than Blackpool; the pier being closed down by the local authority due to safety concerns. It will remain closed until someone finds the millions of ££££s required to carry out considerable remedial work, in order to make the structure safe.

However, Clive was more fortunate with a third site, the Milestones Living History Museum at Basingstoke, Hampshire. Milestones is essentially an open-air museum housed in a massive purpose-built warehouse (a contradiction in terms, I know). There are cobbled Victorian streets with various shops and displays; steam engines and trams, and all manner of interesting things that make this an ideal venue for slot machines. Clive initially moved about twenty machines here from Southport, but with the demise of the Blackpool and Southsea sites, he has managed to sneak in a



Milestones in Hampshire.

few more, bringing the number up to about seventy. I recall Milestones dates back to the early '80s, and is an attraction that I have always meant to visit, but unfortunately I have never quite made it. Now that Clive has machines there, I'll try to make more of an effort.

Clive still has machines on a few smaller sites, notably Swindon Steam Museum and Portsmouth Royal Naval Dockyards, although he did lose another long-established site last year, this being the small penny arcade on Swanage pier. Apparently, the pier management felt that the space would be better used as storage!

Now onto our two last remaining seaside arcades. I mentioned Peter Williamson's arcade briefly last month. Peter owns the model village at Great Yarmouth, tagged onto which is the arcade. However, although part of the model village, the arcade is an attraction in its own right – you don't have to visit the model village in order to access the arcade (although I would certainly recommend you do). Peter has a fine selection of machines, numbering somewhere between fifty and sixty in total.

And then there's me down in Brighton. I have about fifty machines at Mechanical Memories, mostly on old penny play. I also have 'number 2' arcade further down the seafront, where there are about twenty machines operating on new money (10p and 20p). Number 2 is usually open between April and September only.

The final operator who will be known to most readers is Darren Hesketh. For many years Darren operated the arcade at the Candle Workshops in Cheshire, which as I stated last month, is now closed (the arcade, not the Candle Workshops). Darren does still operate machines at Botany Bay and Bygone Times in Lancashire, both of which have been featured in this magazine by Stuart Dale. I believe Darren has about thirty machines at each site, which include some rarities, and of course Darren's treasured working models.



Peter Williamson's arcade at Great Yarmouth.

And now onto some other collections, in no particular order:

Wookey Hole, Somerset. At the time I visited, back in the mid 1990s, this was the largest collection of machines on public display in the UK. I understand the machines have been reduced in number, but still worth a visit. However, bear in mind that you do have to visit the caves in order to access the penny arcade.

Watermouth Castle, North Devon. A popular attraction, near Ilfracombe, with a fine collection of machines, including one of only two Hawtins Clutching Hands merchandisers on public display in the country (Clive has the other). As with Wookey Hole, you do need to visit the attraction to access the machines.

Battlesbridge, Essex. Joe Pettit has a small but impressive collection of machines at the Bones Lane Antiques Centre, including working models by Ahrens, Dennison and Lee. No charge to enter.

Rye Heritage Centre, East Sussex. Stuart Dale featured this venue in the magazine recently, and it was also featured by me way back in Issue 2. Without doubt the finest collection of working models in the country. No charge to enter.



Ahrens Marathon Cycle race at Battlesbridge.

Bygones, Devon. Stuart wrote about this attraction a couple of years ago (Issue 53). If you're in Torquay, certainly worth a visit, as there is small but impressive collection of machines that can be played. An entrance fee applies.

Arreton Barns, Isle of Wight. A large tourist attraction, which includes a penny arcade with a good selection of machines. As far as I know, there is no charge for entry (but I could be wrong).

House on the Hill Toy Museum, Essex. Another attraction featured by Stuart in the magazine recently. A good selection of machines, but not all are available to play. Once again, you need to visit the attraction in order to access the machines.

Weston-Super-Mare museum, North Somerset. Yet another venue that was featured by Stuart recently (Issue 70). A small collection of machines, but worth a visit if you're in Weston. As far as I know, there is no admission fee (if there is, it will probably be small).

In addition to the above, there are many other attractions and museums around the county that have machines on public display, often just one or two. If anyone knows of a venue where a reasonable number of machines are on display and can be played, do please let me know.....and I'll get Stuart to visit!

Jerry



Bolland The Haunted Churchyard at Rye.

Strange but True

Part 3

By Robert Rowland

Back in 1965, the Marine Pastimes arcade here in Mablethorpe housed a very large, floor-standing electro-mechanical machine called Calypso. It was a two-sided, ten player machine (five playing sections each side) with each section allowing you to bet on one of five colours, which were red, green, yellow, white and blue. Each play section had a compact five coin entry, with a small round circle of each colour above each corresponding slot. You could bet on all five colours if you wanted.

At the start of play, large size coloured balloons would start to flash randomly, and at the same time, a large clock with a single pointer showing the odds would start to rotate in an anti-clockwise direction. When the balloons stopped flashing, one would remain lit and seconds later the clock pointer would stop, showing the odds for that win. The 12 O'clock position was the one you wanted, as it was the only position on the clock that paid 12d; all the other payouts were 2d, 4d and 6d. As stated on the machine's top-flash 'one colour must win', there was no lost position. This was a good machine for me personally, feeling up the payout trays on each of the individual sections. I flicked the metal chute with my fingers, which nearly always resulted in pennies dropping down that were lodged up in the chute. This did prove profitable back in 1965.

This machine really stood out in the centre of the arcade; it really was an awesome sight. I do wish I could find a picture of this machine. However, the other week I was round at my good friend David Lascelles' house and he was running through some old cine film that he had taken back in 1962. There was a tiny five second clip of Calypso on his film – I was truly over the moon; I really thought that the only image of Calypso was stored in my head. The footage was taken at night, and the machine is also surrounded by players, but I believe this five second clip is possibly the only footage that exists. To see this exclusive clip of Calypso, get onto Youtube and search: mmm calypso clip.

I never saw another Calypso, despite holiday trips to other seaside resorts in the 1960s. As for the only Calypso machine in Mablethorpe, it was broken up in 1971 when decimalisation came in.

In the early 1970s I was friendly with one of the mechanics in Bingoland, and he knew I was interested in machines. One day in the arcade, he came up to me and said "I've got four machines going cheap if you want them." I just said yes, I didn't even ask what they were!

Two days later, a car and trailer pulled up outside our house with four machines all tightly strapped down. I can't remember how much I paid for them but can't have been much because I was still in my last year at school. The machines I ended up with were two Bradley Challengers (the earlier all metal type), a Bryans Trickler and a Steer-a-ball. I played these newly-acquired machines at home for a couple of weeks, but sadly, I became bored with them.

The Trickler upset me because you used to get ten balls dropping down the playfield, one at a time, and if you caught them you scored 1, 2 or 3. However, when a ball was caught in the 3 points section, the score pointer only moved one position instead of three, and I had no idea how to fix this problem. Looking back, it was probably only a little adjustment needed to fix, but at the time I just thought he had sold me a load of rubbish!

The Steer-a-Ball was a bit of a challenge for the first few days, but I also soon got fed up with that. The large steel ball was workable down to the bottom row, but then it always seemed to roll past the 'home' hole and into the lost. I was even trying to lift my own machine, despite its weight, to get that ball to drop into the home (coin return) winning hole. To be honest, they were not the sort of machines that I was brought up on. The size of the Steer-a-Ball didn't help, as I only had a small shed to myself at the bottom of the garden to keep my machines.

Within three months both of those machines were sold on; I can't even remember who ended up getting them. Regarding the two Challengers, these are machines I did play in the 1960s, but being young and foolish, within six months the main front glasses on both machines were broken. I remember one of the machines tipping over, and smash went that glass; I think the other met a similar fate. After this, I started messing with them, pulling parts off here and there, and eventually what was left of them ended up in the dustbin. Believe it or not, it was all good fun at the time. Of course, it's now 2013 and I could cry to think I actually owned those machines. I would now welcome all four back with open arms. Strange but true.

Robert Rowland

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Genuine Mills Golden Falls one-armed bandit. Restored, with lovely oak sides, dagger handle etc. jackpot and escalator. 25c play, but works on 6d coin. £550

I have many other machines for sale.

Paul 01278 782714 (Somerset)

Paul.vickers@hotmail.co.uk

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Rock-Ola Worlds Far Jigsaw pinball, in very nice condition, on old penny play. Complete with legs, backflash, original cashbox, original lock etc. Very good playfield and jigsaw pieces (not faded). A cut above most examples. £790.

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Both items are collection from South Devon only, or can deliver within 50 mile radius of Exeter.

Tim 07860 725132 (Devon)

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Sega Diamond Star one-armed bandit. 1p escalator, excellent Formica sides and good chrome. With locks & keys. £225.

Paul 01278 782714 (Somerset)

Paul.vickers@hotmail.co.uk

Many other bandits for sale.

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Plans or drawings for working models, Haunted Churchyard etc. for vintage amusement arcade.

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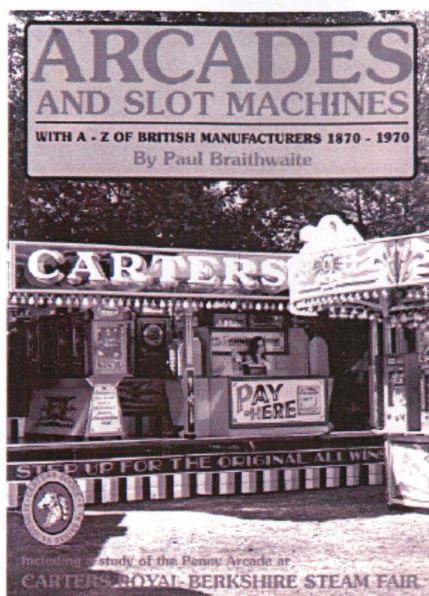
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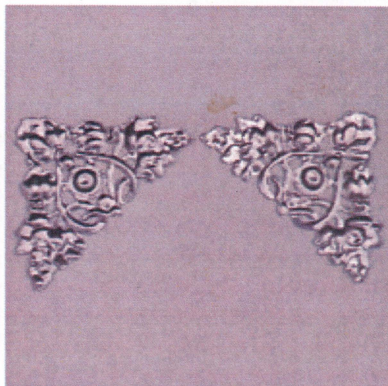
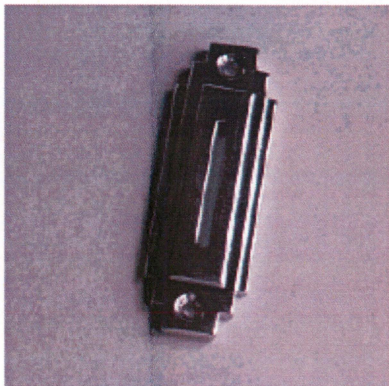
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